

Tabling of bill 'in right direction'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Selangor Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals patron Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said although the tabling of the Animal Welfare Bill 2015 for its first reading in the Dewan Rakyat was long overdue, it is welcomed by animal lovers.

He said the outdated Animal Act 1953 was last amended in the 1990s, with the punishment being only fines with a maximum of RM50,000.

"After repeated appeals by animal activist groups over many years, it was finally brought to Parliament. I applaud Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob for it," Lee told the *New Sunday Times* yesterday.

He said the "delay" could be because the issue was not the government's priority at the moment, with debates revolving around the Sedition Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

"The fact that the bill was tabled shows how far we have come. I hope Parliament will treat it seriously in its second tabling next month."

The proposal, said Lee, was a step in the right direction, as it had been frequently reported that local authorities were inflicting cruelty on stray animals and owners were abandoning their pets after losing interest in them.

He said pet owners must understand the responsibility of caring for animals, and that pets were life companions.

"We cannot neglect them when we get bored of them or when they get sick, using the excuse that sending them to the vet is expensive."

The bill will establish the Animal Welfare Board, which will monitor the work of associations and educate people on the humane treatment of animals.